

## Sūrah Fath

### Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* bears witness to the fulfilment of the promise made with the believers in verse thirty five of the previous *sūrah*.<sup>1</sup> It begins with the truce of Hudaibiyyah which proved to be a prelude to the conquest of Makkah and to the completion of favour to the Prophet (sws) and his *ummah*. Stated in it are also the predictions and glad tidings of conquest and dominance of this *ummah* mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel so that it becomes evident to both the believers and the disbelievers that whatever happened, is happening and will happen is not by chance. All this is pre-determined in the scheme of God which is bound to materialize. No force can stop it.

### Background of the *Sūrah*

In order to understand this *sūrah*, it is essential to understand its background. It was revealed as a ray of hope in very hopeless circumstances and as glad tidings of an open victory in circumstances when Muslims felt that they were being vanquished. It assured the Muslims in very precarious circumstances, and in not more than two years every promise and threat given materialized in a manner that no doubt remained about it in the minds of both friends and foes.

The detail of this rather concise premise is that in 6<sup>th</sup> AH, the Prophet (sws) was given glad tidings in a dream that he will do '*umrah* with a group of his companions. On the basis of this dream, he called upon people to prepare themselves for '*umrah*. Though Muslims were in a continuous state of war with the Quraysh and there was a strong chance that if Muslims went to offer '*umrah* in their collective capacity, they

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1. The verse reads:

فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَتَرَكَمُ أَغْمَالَكُمْ (٣٥ : ٤٧)

So do not falter and call for a compromise and you will remain dominant and God is on your side and will not show any dishonesty with you in your deeds (47:35)

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would definitely try to stop them and the situation could lead to a battle. However, Muslims were so overwhelmed with the deprivation from the Baytullāh that they got ready to accompany the Prophet (sws) while disregarding this danger. The Hypocrites, who have been mentioned in the previous *sūrah*, tried their best to discourgae and demotivate the Muslims. They tried to strike fear in their hearts by saying that those who will go to Makkah will never return. However, Muslims fully trusted the dream of the Prophet (sws). For this reason about fifteen hundred Companions (rta) became ready to accompany him.

There is a difference of opinion between historians about the month of this journey – whether it was Rajab or Dhū al-Qa’dah. It was, in any case, one of the two. These months have always remained specific to offer *hajj* and ‘*umrah*. For this reason, Muslims hoped that there is a very logical reason for the Quraysh showing respect to the sanctity of these months. The Prophet (sws) and the Companions (rta) wore the *aḥrām* of ‘*umrah* at Dhū al-Ḥulayfah, a place six miles from Makkah. They took along with them seventy camels for sacrifice and to distinguish these animals, people put collars around their necks so that it becomes evident to every onlooker that these are sacrificial animals (*hadī*) and no one should harm them. They did not have any ammunition with them; all they had were swords and they too were sheathed. In other words, it was fully taken care of the fact that the Quraysh present no excuse for a battle; however, their over-blown pride of the age of *jāhilliyah* did not allow them to allow the procession to enter Makkah. They tried to make different excuses by making incursions through their people but the Prophet (sws) did not allow any of their mischief to succeed. When he reached Ḥudaybiyyah, he sent an envoy to their leaders with the message that he had come with the intention of offering ‘*umrah* only; he has no other intention. However, they decided to kill the envoy and it was only with great difficulty that his life was saved after a group of people interfered. After that, he sent his special envoy: ‘Uthmān (rta). He too tried to fully assure the Quraysh but they continued to show stubbornness. However, they did not misbehave with ‘Uthmān (rta) in any way and treated him very respectfully; they even offered him to do *ṭawāf* if he wanted to. ‘Uthmān (sws) did not accept their offer because he was not ready to undertake this ritual without the Prophet (sws).

In this pendimonium, ‘Uthmān’s return got delayed and a rumour spread in the Muslim camp that he had been martyred. Quite naturally, this acutely inflamed the Muslims. The Prophet (sws) too was effected by it. He called upon people to pledge a covenant of *jihād* at this hands so that a do or die war could be waged against the Quraysh. The

Companions (rta) earnestly and enthusiastically took this pledge. When the Quraysh received the news that Muslims were about to launch an attack, they sent a delegation under the leadership of Suhayl ibn 'Amr to negotiate peace. The delegation, in order to salvage the pride of the Quraysh, greatly stressed upon the Muslims to go back this year and return the following one whence the Makkans will vacate the city for three days to avoid any clash. It was also insisted upon that if any person of the Quraysh ran away to the Muslims, the latter would be under obligation to return him whereas the reverse would not be the case. The Companions (rta) were not ready to accept these conditions at any cost. However, the Prophet (sws), on divine bidding, accepted them and a settlement was reached on the following conditions.

1. For ten years, there shall be no war between the two parties. During this time, no party will launch any open or hidden onslaught against one another.

2. During this time, if a person belonging to the Quraysh ran away to the Muslims, they will have to return him, while the Quraysh would not be bound to return any person of the Muslims who goes to them.

3. Any tribe of the Arabs can enter into this settlement by becoming an ally of either of the two parties.

4. Muslims will go back this year and return the next to offer '*umrah*. They will be able to stay in Makkah for three days and each of them, if he wishes, can only bring one sword. In these three days, the people of Makkah will vacate the city so that any clash can be avoided.

Two of these conditions were every detestable to the Muslims, as has been indicated earlier. People thought that accepting them would be tantamount to an acknowledgement of defeat and were not ready at any cost to accept any condition that would depict them as the weaker party. It was at this instance that the caliph 'Umar (rta) expressed his emotions in a manner that made him regret it all his life. After the peace agreement had been signed, the Prophet (sws) directed the Muslims to offer sacrifice and then shave their heads and in this way complete their '*umrah*. However, such was the sorrow and distress found in the Muslims that no one was ready to comply. At last, the Prophet (sws) himself took the initiative. When people realized that there was no room for any change in the directive, they too were compelled to get up and complete the rites of the '*umrah*. While returning, the general feeling was of being overwhelmed and of being vanquished. For this reason, a natural question that came to their minds was that if the dream of prophets of God are true, then what happened to the dream which the Prophet (sws) saw and as a result of which had embarked on this

journey. It was in these circumstances in which this *sūrah* was revealed and as has been indicated earlier was revealed as glad tidings of a clear victory. As far as the question is concerned that how did a thing that was seen as defeat by common Muslims become a clear victory, it shall be answered in the *tafsīr* of the *sūrah*.

Readers may first take an overview of the meanings of the *sūrah*.

### Analysis of the Meanings

**Verses (1-7):** The Prophet (sws) is given glad tidings that he has been granted an open victory in the form of the Ḥudaybiyyah truce. This open victory is a prelude to an imminent conquest of Makkah which will totally humble the disbelievers before him; the Almighty will complete the favour of His religion on him and after successfully accomplishing his mission, he will attain the complete and eternal pleasure of God. A very blessed aspect of this campaign is that He opened the way to enhancement of faith and to Paradise for the believers, which in the sight of God is great success. This campaign also became the means of God's anger and condemnation on the men and women from among the Hypocrites who would make all sorts of evil estimations about God and were not able to grasp the reality that all the forces of heavens and the earth are under the command of God and He, in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom, makes use of their service the way He desires or can desire.

**Verses (8-10):** The common Muslims are addressed and told that a Messenger comes from God as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. It is the duty of people to profess faith in him, respect him, support him in all his campaigns and be his helpers. Those who pledge a covenant at his hands, in fact, pledge a covenant at the hands of God. If they fulfil the obligations imposed by this pledge, then they will receive great reward, and if they do not do so, then they should remember that it is only they who will be doomed for this behaviour. God will not suffer any loss from this.

**Verses (11-16):** The Prophet (sws) is informed that at this instance the Hypocrites who did not go out with him will come to him to beg pardon on the grounds that they were forced not to go because of their household responsibilities; so they should be forgiven and the Prophet (sws) should pray to God for their repentance. He is told to inform them that the real reason for not going was their thought that this time the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims would not return and that through this speculation of theirs they have only sought to ruin their own selves. Now their matter rests with God. He alone will forgive whomsoever He wants and forgive whomsoever He wants.

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The Prophet (sws) is also informed about these Hypocrites that when they will see that victory is being gained without any war, they will try their best to secure a place among the warriors; however, he must never give them this permission. They should be informed that soon they will be faced with a powerful enemy. If at that moment, they go out it would be alright and if at that moment too they do not go out by making similar excuses, then for them too the same punishment will be ordained as has been ordained for the disbelievers.

**Verse (17):** Those people are mentioned whose excuse to not attend the battle would not be regarded as hypocrisy as long as they remain obedient from their hearts to God and His Messenger (rta).

**Verses (18-21):** The courageous among the Companions took the *bay'ah riḍwān* are mentioned. They are given glad tidings of victory, spoils of war and of the conquest of Makkah.

**Verses (22-25):** A mention of the fact that had the Quraysh waged war on the occasion of Ḥudaybiyyah, they would have been routed. The aspect which made the Muslims superior in this agreement is referred to and also mentioned is the fact that this truce was an open moral and religious defeat of the Quraysh. Stated then is the real reason because of which Muslims were not allowed to wage war in spite of the fact that Quraysh had been over-awed by them.

**Verse (26):** The moral victory secured by the Muslims in the wake of the moral defeat earned by the Quraysh is referred to. In contrast with the bias of the Quraysh to emotional frenzy, the majesty displayed by the Muslims in piety and in obeying God and His Prophet (sws) is alluded to.

**Verse (27):** An affirmation of the dream of the Prophet (sws). The wisdom in its delay to materialize is referred to.

**Verses (28-29):** A mention of the fact that the supremacy of Islam over all religions is beyond doubt. The parable of the Prophet (rta) and his Companions (rta) found in the Torah and the parable of the gradual victory of the truth found in the Gospel is alluded to.

### Section I: Verses (1-7)

#### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا (١) لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ

عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا (٢) وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَظِيمًا (٣) هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ  
السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيْمَانِهِمْ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٤) لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قُورًا عَظِيمًا (٥)  
وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا (٦) وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ  
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٧)

Indeed, We have blessed you with a clear victory so that God may forgive you your past and future sins, complete His favour upon you and may guide you to a straight path and bestow on you His undefeatable help. (1-3)

It was He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the faithful so that their faith may grow with their faith and all the legions of the heavens and the earth belong to God and God is All-Knowing and Wise; so that He may admit the believers, both men and women, into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide in them forever and so that He may brush away their sins and this, in God's sight, is a great triumph. (4-5)

And that God may punish the Hypocrites and the Idolaters, men and women, who would make evil estimations about God. A turn of evil shall befall them alone and God's wrath was on them and He has cursed them and has prepared for them Hell and it is an evil abode. And to God belong the legions of the heavens and the earth and God is Mighty and Wise. (6-7)

### Explanation

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا<sup>2</sup> (١)

The expression فَتْحٌ مُبِينٌ (clear victory) refers to the truce of Hūdaybiyyah. There is no occasion of interpreting it to refer to any other victory. There a number of aspects with regard to which it can be called a clear victory:

Firstly, this is the first occasion on which the Quraysh openly accepted that Muslims too had a right on the Baytullāh. This acknowledgement was done as a favour to the Muslims but was done after they were over-awed with their might. It will become evident from verse twenty four

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2. Indeed, We have blessed you with a clear victory.

that had this peace agreement not been struck and a war had ensued, the victory for the Muslims was certain. The Quraysh had fully assessed this situation and thus were desirous of an agreement; however, in order to have the upper hand, they wanted the Muslims not insist on 'umrah this year and should come the following year. In order to please the Muslims, they tried to gratify them by offering to vacate the city for three days when they come the following year to avoid any clash. This was no small an offer from the Quraysh.

Secondly, as a result of this agreement, the Quraysh accepted the Muslims as an equal political force in Arabia. They no longer regarded the Muslims as rebels and traitors which they hitherto openly proclaimed; to them Muslims were now a rival political force of equal strength. Thus they openly acknowledged the right of the Muslims that they could make any of the Arabs tribes as their allies if the latter were willing.

Thirdly, the Quraysh also acknowledged the military might of the Muslims because they themselves insisted to write the condition in the agreement that there shall be no war between the two for ten years.

Fourthly, if on this occasion, the Almighty did not allow the Prophet (sws) and his companions to wage war, then this was not because of any weakness of the Muslims; it was solely because there were many who had openly announced themselves as Muslims and many who were Muslim in their hearts and had yet to openly announce this and who as yet had not migrated. There was a danger that in the event of a war, they could be harmed by the Muslims themselves.

In short, there were many aspects of this truce being a clear victory for the Muslims which could not have been hidden from them; however, the Quraysh displayed their bigotry that they possessed from the days of *jāhiliyyah* in such a manner and some incidents like the incident of Abū Jandal were so inciting that a general feeling prevailed among the Muslims that they were the weaker of the two parties. In their frenzy of emotions, people could not fully reflect on the conditions of the agreement and assess what they would gain and what they would lose as a result of it. When this *sūrah* unveiled the actual situation, people realized that they had committed a mistake in understanding the implications of the agreement. When its consequences came before them, every person openly said that this agreement had proven to be a prelude to the conquest of Makkah.

لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا

مُسْتَقِيمًا (٢) وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا (٣)<sup>3</sup>

The particle *ل* is to express the consequence. In other words, the meaning of the verse is that this clear victory which the Almighty has blessed the Muslims with is a prelude to the following things which the Almighty will grant the Prophet (sws):

Firstly, time is near when the Prophet will be free from the responsibilities of his mission, and the Almighty will bless him with His mercy by forgiving all his past and future sins.

Secondly, the Almighty will be completing his favour on him.

Thirdly, the Almighty will open the true way of guidance for him.

Fourthly, the Almighty will grant him with an unassailable dominance.

All these four things are mentioned here rather concisely; in order to understand them fully it is needed that they may be fully explained in the light of the parallels of the Qur'ān.

The words *لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ* give glad tidings to the Prophet (sws) that after this clear victory, time has arrived for him in which he will successfully complete the responsibilities imposed on him in the capacity of a Messenger of God. This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at various places in different styles. For example, in Sūrah Naṣr, the words are:

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (١١٠: ٣)

When the help of God and the victory comes and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, extol the glory of your Lord while expressing gratitude to Him and seek His forgiveness. Indeed, He is ever disposed to mercy. (110:1-3)

In the above *sūrah*, besides the glad tidings of conquest and dominance there is an indication of the fact that time would arrive when he would be relieved of his responsibilities as a Messenger of God; however, instead of saying this in clear words, he has been asked to prepare for it through extolling the glory of God, the prayer and asking forgiveness. In the verse under discussion, this subject has been discussed, keeping in view the context and occasion, in the form of very clear glad tidings. It is said

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3. So that God may forgive you your past and future sins, complete His favour upon you and may guide you to a straight path and bestow on you His undefeatable help.

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that after this clear victory granted to him time is near whe he will be relieved by the Almighty of the responsibility He had imposed on him, and will relieve him in such a manner that he will be held successful and triumphant in his mission and will forgive all his past and future sins. The greatest glad tidings for the Prophet (sws) could no doubt only have been that the Almighty would relieve him of his responsibilities in such a manner that he would have befittingly discharged his obligations as a Messenger and not be held responsible in the slightest way for anything left amiss, and that he would be fully assured that he had done his duty fully to the pleasure and satisfaction of his Lord. In this verse, this very news has been given to him in a certified way and there could be no greater a certification. In gratitude of this, the Prophet (sws) had greatly increased the extent of his worship in his last years; when he was asked by people that why does he goes through this strenuous routine when he all his past and future sins had been forgiven, his answer would be: أَفَلَا أَكُونُ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا (should I not be a grateful servant of my Lord?)<sup>4</sup>

I have explained at various places in this *tafsīr* that the sins ascribed here to the Prophet (sws) do not refer to ones which are the result of following base desires; prophets of God never commit such sins; however, in the process of realizing their mission of establishing the dominance of religion at times because of noble motives certain things emanate from them on which they are checked by the Almighty. For example, Hypocrites would come to the Prophet (sws) with various excuses so that they could be granted permission to not participate in *jihād*; the Prophet (sws) would be fully aware that these people are only making lame excuses; however, because of his gracious temperament, he would grant them permission so that they may not be disgraced. This softness from the Prophet (sws) was though a result of his graciousness and was not the result of following base desires; however, the Almighty checked him on this attitude because a prophet is a scale of justice in every matter. It is essential for him that even when dealing graciously with his followers he not exceed the limit set forth by the Almighty in this regard.

Similarly, at times, the Prophet (sws) would pamper the leaders of his nation very much thinking that if they embrace faith, then this would give great strength to the whole cause. This thinking in itself was nothing sinful; in fact, it is something which is in line with the expediency required for the cause of religion; however, if this inclination becomes so pronounced that as a result of this its worthy recipients are ignored or it

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4. See, for example: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 380, (no. 1078).

causes an increase in the arrogance of the unworthy, then the Almighty stops His Messenger from it. The incident of the blind man mentioned in Sūrah ‘Abas is an example of this.

Similar incidents have occurred in lives of other prophets of God, which I have explained at relevant places of this *tafsīr*. In the verse under consideration also, the sins attributed to the Prophet (sws) are of this nature. He was given glad tidings about all such sins that they have been forgiven.

The words “past and future” express the all embracing nature of this forgiveness. They also indicate that the blemishes before these glad tidings have also been forgiven and those after it shall also be forgiven. New glad tidings are not required for this.

The words وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ convey the completion of the favour of religion. Thus when this favour was completed on the occasion of the last *hajj*, it was declared: الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا (3:5) (this day [for your guidance] I have completed your religion for you and completed My favour to you. I have chosen Islam to be your faith, (5:3)).

The words وَيَهْدِيكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا mention the consequence of the completion of the favour of religion: in this manner will the Almighty bless him with the guidance of the true path from which Satan had lured people away. It needs to be kept in consideration here that the religion revealed by the Almighty for the guidance of mankind was lost by the Jews and Christians while the Idolaters had converted the Baytullāh built by Abraham (sws) and his son Ishmael (sws) into a place of idol worship and lost the real sign-post of guidance. As a result, the path leading to God had virtually become extinct. This path was re-opened only after the Almighty revived and completed His religion through the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), and the lighthouse of monotheism built by Abraham (sws) was once again restored to its original splendour by cleansing it from disbelief. These words point to this very reality that now religion will be restored to its pristine form and the radiant centre of *tawḥīd* will also be unveiled which was built to take people to the real path of guidance.

Here these glad tidings have been given while addressing the Prophet (sws); in verse twenty of this *sūrah*, these very glad tidings are given while addressing all the Muslims. I will *inshallāh* explain them further there.

In نَصْرًا عَظِيمًا, the expression نَصْرٌ عَظِيمٌ refers to that victory and help over disbelief which is unchallengeable and unassailable. Such a victory, obviously, could only have been achieved by the Prophet (sws)

when the dominance of disbelief is totally done away. In other words, this could only have been achieved once the Quraysh are totally humbled and Muslims become the custodians of the Baytullāh. Till then, the successes achieved by the Muslims against the Quraysh were no less important but were not ones which could not be challenged. As long as the Quraysh were in charge of Makkah, they were indeed a force to reckon with; however, the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah had really dented their power and the time was not far when their old edifice of political power would be razed to the ground. This very نَصْرٌ عَزِيزٌ is predicted here. The word عَزِيزٌ besides meaning dominance and ascendancy also means something which is unassailable.

Here the eloquence in the sequence of the glad tidings given is worthy of consideration: the thing which was the most imminent is mentioned as the end and the thing which was a summary of all others and destined to materialize at the end is mentioned the foremost. The reason for this, in my opinion, is that this is an occasion of giving glad tidings to the Prophet (sws). No doubt, the conquest of Makkah was great news for the Prophet (sws); however, an even greater one was to present before him the reward he would receive in the Hereafter and not much time remained and not much time remains when he will receive it (لِيَعْفَرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ)

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٤)<sup>5</sup>

The help promised in the previous verse is substantiated in this one. It is only as a miraculous result of God's help that the believers showed the courage to come out with the Prophet (sws) for 'umrah at his call so that through their courage and through the company of the Prophet (sws) they could increase the treasure of faith they already had.

It needs to be appreciated that though this journey was undertaken for 'umrah, however, the Prophet (sws) undertook it in very dangerous circumstances. Muslims were in a perpetual state of war with the Quraysh, and till then such was their determination and resolve that the latter were attacking Madīnah every now and then. In these

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5. It was He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the faithful so that their faith may grow with their faith and all the legions of the heavens and the earth belong to God and God is All-Knowing and Wise.

circumstances, it could not be expected in any way that Muslims as a group go for 'umrah and they be easily allowed to offer it without any resistance. Consequently, it would become evident from the coming verses that the Hypocrites reckoned on this very basis that the Muslims were taking themselves to destruction and this time would not be able to return home. In these circumstances, it was extra ordinary for fourteen or fifteen hundred Companions (rta) to leave their homes to travel a couple of hundred miles and that too without any weapons. However, the Almighty blessed their faith and granted them the resolve and determination for this journey. The implication is that just as the Almighty blessed the Prophet's Companions with resolve at this instance, in a similar manner he will bless them with it in later phases, and the نَصْرٌ عَزِيزٌ promised by him is bound to be fulfilled

The expression refers to the fact that the trials which are faced by the believers in this world are meant to test their faith. If they succeed in these tests, their faith is strengthened and a stage is reached that they become the contented souls referred to by the Qur'ān, and if they fail these tests and keep on failing them, then at last a stage may be reached in which the spark of their faith is totally extinguished.

I have been explaining this practice of God at various places in this *tafsīr*, and an obvious consequence of this practice of God is that faith is something which is liable to increase and decrease; had it been something static, there would have been no need to test it. If it is ascribed to Imām Abu Ḥanifah that he was not convinced of the fact that faith can increase or decrease, then it has a special context: it refers to faith in the legal sense on the basis of which a person is granted the rights of a Muslim citizen in an Islamic State. He is not referring to the levels of faith just discussed on which depends the rewards and ranks of the Hereafter. As far as faith in the legal sense is concerned, it is found in equal extent in all Muslims who believe in the essentials of Islam and an Islamic state will deal equally with them as Muslims. There shall be no difference in this respect between a urban citizen and a rural one. As far as the Hereafter is concerned, the matter there depends on the actual faith found in a person – something known only to God and He alone will decide about it. This view of Imam Abū Ḥnīfah in itself is absolutely correct; however, it is advocated in a very wrong sense and those who object to it also do not try to understand its actual background,

The words وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا imply that if the Almighty persuaded the Muslims to accompany the Prophet (sws), then He actually did a favour to them so that by doing this virtuous act they

could further enhance their faith; otherwise God is not dependent on anyone to help His Messenger or His religion. All the forces of the heavens and the earth are in the control of the Almighty; whenever He wants, He can take revenge from the disbelievers through His forces; however, He by urging the believers to help His Messenger has opened the way of great reward for them; He is all-knowing and all-wise. All His actions are based on knowledge and wisdom and in this particular action of His too, there is great wisdom. If any further explanation of this subject is needed, readers may look up what I have written while explaining verse four of Sūrah Muḥammad. Further ahead, this verse is coming up with another aspect. There it shall be explained further.

لِيَدْخُلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفَّرُ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا (٥)<sup>6</sup>

This verse mentions the reward of *لِيَزِدُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ* (so that their faith may grow with their faith) and the linguistic style adopted is permutative (*badal*). The implication is that ways opened by God to strengthen their inner radiance is because in this way He wants believing men and women to enter into gardens watered by streams; they will abide therein forever and He will remove all their sins from their accounts. In other words, this is not an unprofitable deal.

Here, it is possible, that a question arises in the mind of a person that entering Paradise is mentioned here first, and obliteration of sins is mentioned later even though it would only be after the latter that people would be able to enter Paradise. In my opinion, this change in order is only an apparent thing. In order to highlight the aspect of glad tidings, Paradise is mentioned first; the purpose of course is to tell us that after cleansing people of their sins will God admit people to Paradise.

The words *وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا* say that this is real and supreme success; so blessed are those who undertook this journey while disregarding all dangers. These words are a prelude to the mention of the Hypocrites whose mention is coming up; it is said about them that they stuck to their homes because of their fear of the Quraysh and reckoned that this step proved very successful for them and they cleverly saved themselves from a big danger. The truth of the matter is that they have

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6. So that He may admit the believers, both men and women, into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide in them forever and so that He may brush away their sins and this, in God's sight, is a great triumph.

not saved themselves from danger; they have in fact flung themselves into it and soon they will realize this.

وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا (٦)<sup>7</sup>

This is a mention of the other aspect of faith. The very trial through which the Almighty opens the way to great success for the Muslims is instrumental in opening the way to the greatest doom for both men and women among Hypocrites and the Idolaters. This is because their blemishes are fully exposed and the truth is conclusively conveyed to them.

The words *الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءَ* refer to those evil thoughts of the Hypocrites which are mentioned ahead in verse twelve thus: *بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا وَزُيِّنَ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ وَكُنْتُمْ* (in fact, you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people and this notion took roots in your hearts; and you harboured evil thoughts and at last ended up doomed).

The Hypocrites and the Idolaters are mentioned together because of their similarity in both head and heart. Just as an Idolater in spite of claiming to be under pledge to worship God worships other Gods also, in a similar manner, a Hypocrite too in spite of claiming to be under the pledge of faith and obedience to God and his Messenger connives with others as is mentioned in the verse: *سَتَطِيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ* (٢٦:٤٧) (we shall follow you in some affairs, (47:26)). Because of this similarity, the Qur'ān has likened hypocrisy to polytheism. I have explained this aspect in my book *Haqīqat-e shirk-o tawhīd* (The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism).<sup>8</sup> Here by mentioning the Hypocrites with the polytheists, the Qur'ān has determined their status: such claimants to faith will at last have the same fate as the polytheists who were their compatriots and like minded to them.

The sentence *عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ* is parenthetical in nature. When their evil speculations and desires about the future of the Muslims were

7. And that God may punish the Hypocrites and the Idolaters, men and women, who would make evil estimations about God. A turn of evil shall befall them alone and God's wrath was on them and He has cursed them and has prepared for them Hell and it is an evil abode.

8. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Haqīqat-e shirk-o tawhīd*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 100-114.

mentioned, it was said forthwith in the discourse that they are waiting for misfortunes to befall the Muslims even though these misfortunes are going to befall them because the fate of the very people they are pinning their hopes in shall come before them and they too will meet a similar fate. God's curse be on them and He has prepared Hell for them which is a very evil abode.

Here another thing is worthy of attention: women are specially mentioned together with men not only when the Muslims were referred to earlier but also when the Hypocrites and the Idolaters were referred to. The reason for this is that a comment is being made on the times of trial. In this very period if hypocrisy is nurtured in a group, then the wife and children have a great role in this. The following statement of the Hypocrites mentioned in verse eleven also refers to this very aspect: سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَا أَمْوَالُنَا وَأَهْلُونَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا (١١: ٤٨) (those among the Bedouins who were left behind will present this excuse to you: "we were occupied with our goods and families; so seek forgiveness for us from God.") A Ḥadīth of the Prophet (sws) also bears witness to this: إِنَّ الْوَلَدَ مَبْخَلَةٌ مُحِبَّةٌ (indeed, the children are the ones who are the most responsible for pushing a person into miserliness and cowardice).<sup>9</sup> On similar lines, if faith finds firm root in the heart of a person, then the determination and perseverance of his wife and children and their trust in God have a great role. This situation entailed that in the mention of the faithful and the Hypocrites, the role of women be specially mentioned so that believing as well as hypocritical women get to know the fact that neither is their Lord unaware of the sacrifices of the believing women nor of the attitude of indolence and being slaves to the pleasures of this world.

وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٧)<sup>10</sup>

This part is also included with a slight difference in the word عَزِيز in verse four. In that verse, this part had a specific connotation; here it occurs to express disgust, disavowal and unconcern for the Hypocrites: if they want to become the fuel of Hell, then may do so; it would only be good riddance. God is not in need of such cowardly people; the forces of the heavens and the earth are with Him. He is the sovereign and the powerful.

9. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 1209, (no. 3666).

10. And to God belong the legions of the heavens and the earth and God is Mighty and Wise.

At the same time, he is wise also; He uses and employs these forces the way He wants to in accordance with His wisdom. The cowardliness and faintheartedness of anyone cannot influence His intentions.

## Section II: Verses (8-21)

In this section, the status and position of the Prophet (sws) is first explained. After that, the obligations which the believers owe to him a result and the responsibilities which were imposed on them as a consequence of their pledge to him are specified. After that, the attitude of the Hypocrites is commented upon in detail who at that time sat in their houses by putting forth false excuses. They did not go out with the Muslims to offer 'umrah fearing that Muslims would never be able to return from this journey. After that, those valiant Muslims are mentioned who, in the absence of means and resources, pledged a covenant of *jihād* at the hands of the Prophet (sws). As a result of their sincerity and pure intentions, they became worthy of God's eternal pleasure as well of His support and help in this world.

Readers may now proceed to read the verses ahead.

### Text and Translation

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٨) لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ  
وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٩) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ  
فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا  
عَظِيمًا (١٠) سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَا أَمْوَالُنَا وَأَهْلُونَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا  
يَقُولُونَ بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ  
ضَرًّا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١١) بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْقَلِبَ  
الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا وَزَيَّنَ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَّتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوءِ وَكُنْتُمْ  
قَوْمًا بُورًا (١٢) وَمَنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنِ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَعِيرًا (١٣) وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ  
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (١٤)  
سَيَقُولُ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ إِذَا انْطَلَقْتُمْ إِلَى مَغَائِمٍ لِتَأْخُذُوهَا ذَرُونَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُبَدِّلُوا  
كَلَامَ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَنْ تَتَّبِعُونَا كَذَلِكَ قَالَ اللَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَسَيَقُولُونَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُونَنَا بَلْ كَانُوا لَا



يَقْفَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٥) قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سُدُّعُونَ إِلَى قَوْمٍ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ تُقَاتِلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسْلِمُونَ فَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٦) لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرْجٌ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ يُعَذِّبْهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٧) لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا (١٨) وَمَعَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً يَأْخُذُونَهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (١٩) وَعَدَّكُمْ اللَّهُ مَعَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً تَأْخُذُونَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هَذِهِ وَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ وَلِتَكُونَ آيَةً لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا (٢٠) وَأُخْرَى لَمْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ أَحَاطَ اللَّهُ بِهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا (٢١)

Indeed, We have sent you forth as a witness and as a bearer of glad tidings and an informer so that O People! You may have faith in God and His Messenger. Help the Messenger and honour him, and glorify God morning and evening. (8-9)

Those who make a pledge with you in fact make a pledge with God. The Hand of God is on their hands. So he who breaks his oath will have to bear its evil and he who keeps his pledge with God, God shall richly recompense Him. (10)

Those among the Bedouins who were left behind will present this excuse to you: "We were occupied with our goods and families; so seek forgiveness for us from God." They say with their tongues what they do not mean in their hearts. Tell them: "Who among you has some authority over God for himself if He intends to harm or benefit you? In fact, God is aware of all what you do. In fact you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people and this notion took roots in your hearts. And you harboured evil thoughts and at last ended up doomed. And those who did not profess faith in God and His Messenger, We have prepared Hell for these disbelievers. And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He will pardon whom He wishes and punishes whom He pleases and God is Forgiving and Merciful. (11-14)

When you set out to acquire the spoils, those who stayed behind will say: "Permission be granted to us also that we may come with you." They seek to change the Word of God. Tell them: "You shall certainly not come with us." So had God said to you earlier as well. Then they will reply: "In fact, you are jealous of us." In fact, it is these people who

understand very little! (15)

Tell those who were left behind from among the Bedouins: “Soon you shall be called upon to fight a mighty enemy. You will have to continue fighting unless they embrace Islam. So if you followed this directive, God will reward you well; and if you turned away, as you turned away earlier, He will inflict on you a grievous punishment.” (16)

It shall be no offence for the blind, the lame, and the sick, and he who obeys God and His Messenger, God will admit him into gardens watered by running streams, and he who turns away, God shall sternly punish him. (17)

God was pleased with the faithful when they were pledging a covenant with you under the tree. So God knew what was in their hearts. Therefore He sent down tranquility upon them, and blessed them with an imminent victory and also with many spoils which they will acquire and God is Mighty and Wise. (18-19)

God has promised you with many spoils which you will acquire. Thus He gave this to you with all promptness and withheld the hands of people from you so that this can become a source of tranquility and a sign for the Muslims and guide you to the straight path. And another victory also on which you do not have power as yet. However, God has it in His grasp and God has power over all things. (20-21)

### Explanation

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٨) لِّتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٩)<sup>11</sup>

The Prophet Muḥammad is addressed and told that the Almighty has sent him to people as a witness and as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. “Witness” here means “witness to the religion of God” telling people what they have been forbidden and directed by Him. He has also been sent at the same time to give glad tidings of Paradise to those who accept his evidence and reform and restructure their lives and to give warnings of Hell to those who reject his witness or do not give due importance to it. Though these words are said as a general principle, yet it will become evident from the gradual progression of the discourse that these words are directed at the Hypocrites who had accepted the

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11. Indeed, We have sent you forth as a witness and as a bearer of glad tidings and an informer so that O People! You may have faith in God and His Messenger. Help the Messenger and honour him, and glorify God morning and evening.

messengerhood of Muḥammad (sws) from their tongues but were trying to find escape routes from the responsibilities this acceptance entailed.

The word شَهِيدٌ refers to one who bears witness. Here it means one who bears witness to the religion of God before people. People have generally interpreted this bearing witness to be the one which the Prophet (sws) will give on the Day of Judgement; however, in my opinion, this view is not correct. The witness borne by the messengers of God before people in the Hereafter is itself based on the witness they will bear before people in this world. I have discussed the nature of this witness while explaining verses 45-47 of Sūrah Ahzāb. Readers who want details may look it up. The witness borne by the prophets of God in the Hereafter is discussed in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Mā'idah.

Muslims are addressed in لَتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا and told that the Prophet (sws) has been sent forth to them as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings so that they profess faith in God and His Messenger, offer support and show respect to the Messenger and glorify the Almighty morning and evening. Faith here, of course, refers to true and strong faith in God and His Messenger. After that, the obvious requirements of faith are mentioned in an ascending order. The requirement of professing faith in the Prophet (sws) is stated as showing respect and helping and supporting him in his mission of establishing religion in the land in his capacity of a Messenger of God. After that the requirement of professing faith in God is stated as glorifying Him morning and evening.

Generally, people have related the part وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ (support and respect him) to the Almighty because they think that if the Messenger is regarded to be the antecedent of the accusative pronoun then, this would create a distance between a noun and its antecedent. In our opinion, this view is based on a misconception. Here the sequence, as is indicated earlier, is ascending; Thus, the issue of this distance does not arise. After asking the believers to profess faith in God and His Messenger, the obligation they owe to the Messenger is stated first because the Messenger was mentioned later in the sequence; thus the obligation owed to him was mentioned right after he was mentioned. After that the obligation owed to the Almighty by the believers is mentioned. This ascending order sequence is adopted by the Qur'ān at various places. Examples of this can be seen in previous *sūrahs*. If the words وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ are not considered to be related to the Prophet (sws), then this would create certain problems in the discourse which it should not have.

For example:

Firstly, this verse occurs in the context of mentioning the rights of the Prophet (sws). It states the purpose for which the Prophet (sws) was sent as witness to the truth and as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. However, if this interpretation is adopted, the verse is divested of its meanings which state his rights and as such is severed from its context.

Secondly, the discourse is primarily directed to the Hypocrites whose real weakness was that in spite of laying claim to faith were devoid of showing obedience to the Prophet (sws) as well as in supporting his mission and befittingly showing respect and reverence (the explanation of which will follow) to him. This situation required that they be told the obvious requirements of professing faith in the Prophet (sws). If these words are not considered to be related to Prophet (sws), then the verse will be disconnected from its background and occasion.

Thirdly, the words **وَعَزَّزُوهُ وَثَوَّقُوهُ** are not at all appropriate to be used for God. With regard to their instances of usage, they are more appropriate to be used for the Prophet (sws). The word **وَتَوَقَّوْهُ** is absolutely inappropriate for the Almighty. The word **تُعَزِّزُوهُ** has never been used in the Qur'ān for the Almighty. Whenever it has been used, it has been used for the Messengers. See, for example, the following verses:

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ (١٢:٥)

God made a covenant with the Israelites and raised among them twelve chiefs. God said: "I shall be with you. If you adhere to your prayers and give *zakāh* and profess faith in the prophets and help them and give God a generous loan, I shall forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens watered by running streams." (5:12)

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَاَلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٧: ١٥٧)

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures) in the Torah and in the *Injīl* – for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure]; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that were upon them. So those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him – it is they who shall prosper.

Readers may look up what I have written to explain verse twenty five of Sūrah Muḥammad regarding the appropriateness of words. There are many verses in the Qur’ān in which different verbs have been used, and merely from the verb, its subject and object can be known. This relates much to the appreciation of the language. If complete regard is not given to this, a lot of misunderstandings result in the interpretation of this verse.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمَآ يَزِيدُهُ مِنْ فَضْلٍ عَظِيمًا (١٠)<sup>12</sup>

This verse is a further reinforcement of the topic just discussed. It is said that people who are pledging the covenant of “to listen and to obey” at the hands of the Prophet (sws) should remember that they are not pledging a covenant at his hands; they are in fact pledging a covenant with God. While pledging a covenant, the hand which they have upon them is not the hand of the Prophet (sws); it is the hand of God. If after pledging this covenant, they evade its responsibilities and break what they had pledged in words by their very deeds and practices, then they should remember that they will have to face its evil consequences. This is because in this covenant the real person is God and no one can harm God. A person who breaches his promises he makes with God is doomed himself. This also should be kept in mind that a person who fulfills the responsibilities he has committed himself to, will never incur any loss; in fact, he will receive great reward for it from the Almighty.

People have generally related this pledge to the “Pledge of Rizwān” even though it has no bearing with it. The “Pledge of Rizwān” is mentioned further ahead in verse eighteen. This verse mentions the general

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12. Those who make a pledge with you in fact make a pledge with God. The Hand of God is on their hands. So he who breaks his oath will have to bear its evil and he who keeps his pledge with God, God shall richly recompense Him.

covenant and pledge of “to listen and to obey” which every believer has to make at the hands of the Prophet (sws). Here its exaltedness and importance and the responsibilities it entails are mentioned to incite emotions of honour in the Hypocrites: they had pledged a covenant at the hands of the Prophet (sws), but when the time came for fulfilling its requirements, they have started to hide their faces. They are told that a covenant pledged with the Prophet (sws) is a covenant with God. If a person evades its responsibilities, then he is actually guilty of breeching his agreement with God. The consequence of this attitude is humiliation both in this world and in that to come.

The *ḍammah* on the genitive pronoun in the word عَلَيَّهٖ has invited objections from the Orientalists on the syntax of Qur’ānic Arabic. These unfortunate people do not know that the books of syntax are no judge on the style and declensions of Qur’ānic Arabic; it is actually the reverse: the Qur’ān is a judge on books of syntax. The Qur’ān is the most perfect example of the pure and unadulterated language of the Quraysh, and is protected in all aspects. For this reason, if any of it appears to be against known principles of syntax, then this will be no error on its part; on the other hand, this will be regarded as a shortcoming of the data analyzed by the grammarians. Sībawayh is the Imām of Arabic syntax and my mentor, Imām Farāhī, also regards him to be so; however, in spite of this, he, in the light of the Qur’ān, has criticized many of Sībawayh’s inferences and concluded that the conventional and customary style is the one which the Qur’ān has adopted and not what Sībawayh has regarded.

In classical eloquent Arabic, at times, the requirements of the beat and rhythm cause a change in words, letters and pronouns. So if a person has mere bookish knowledge of Arabic, he cannot be comprehensive in collating them. Take for example the case of pronouns. There are numerous examples in the Qur’ān in which a pronoun has become part of a word. There is no other reason for this other than beat and rhythm. Thus for example in verse 111 of Sūrah A‘rāf occurs the expression أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ (defer him and his brother at the moment). Similarly, in verse 52 of Sūrah Nūr occur the words: يَخْشَى اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقُهُ (fears God and becomes God-conscious).

Just as the vowel sound of *ḍammah* appears strange to people in the verse under discussion, a precisely similar situation appears in verse 63 of Sūrah Kahf: وَمَا أُنْسَانِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ (٦٣:١٨) (it was Satan who made me forget to mention this, (18:63)). Here the purpose is not to comprehensively gather all such examples. Those who are interested to do more research on

the subject will find more examples in the last group of the Qur'ān in which merely because of the beat and rhythm the structure of letters, words and pronouns have been altered so much that grammarians do not find any reason for it. Here also the situation is no different.

سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَا أَمْوَالُنَا وَأَهْلُونَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا يَقُولُونَ بِآلِسِنَتِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا<sup>13</sup>

This verse mentions the real thing for which a prelude was given earlier. It is said that when the Prophet (sws) will safely return to his home after this journey, those among the Bedouins who had stayed behind will come over to him and present their excuse. They will say that their responsibilities towards their livestock as well as their involvements in providing for their families was the reason that they were not fortunate enough to go with him. They will ask him to pray to God for their forgiveness because they could not help but staying back. It is said that this excuse put forth by them is not worthy at all; they are saying something from their tongues which is not in their hearts.

The words قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا tell the Prophet (sws) to ask them that if such is the importance of their interests that because of them they are ready to ignore the rights of God and His Messenger, then they should speak up that if God wants to harm them or give them some benefit, who can stop Him?

Consider next the words: بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا. Their implication is that they should not hide behind baseless excuses. God is fully aware of their hidden feats as well.

Here, the word الْمُخَلَّفُونَ is used for the Hypocrites which means people who had been left behind even though they were the ones who had chosen to stay behind. I have already explained this in Sūrah Tawbah while commenting on the Hypocrites and the battle of Tabūk: when the political acumen of these people led them to opt out, the Almighty too

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13. Those among the Bedouins who were left behind will present this excuse to you: "We were occupied with our goods and families; so seek forgiveness for us from God." They say with their tongues what they do not mean in their hearts. Tell them: "Who among you has some authority over God for himself if He intends to harm or benefit you? In fact, God is aware of all what you do."

threw them behind. In Sūrah Şaff, the words used are: فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ (and when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray, (61:5)). Here in the verse under discussion it is said that when these people because of their cowardliness did not come ahead, the Almighty pushed them back. These people mostly belonged to the suburban villages of Madīnah. For this reason, the word used for them is A'rāb which is common for Bedouins.

In the expression: قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنَّ, the word يَمْلِكُ encompasses the meaning of يَمْنَعُ as is evident from the preposition مِنْ. While translating, I have kept this aspect in consideration.

بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا وَزَيَّنَ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ  
وَوَضَعْتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا (١٢)

This is an explanation of the secret referred to in the previous verse: the real thing that had stopped them was their thought that this time the Muslims would be totally decimated by the Quraysh, and they and their Prophet (sws) would never be able to return to their families.

The words وَزَيَّنَ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ refer to the fact that since this notion of theirs was very dear to them, they adorned their hearts with it, and in accordance with the practice of God, it was endeared to them. Under its influence, they made many evil speculations about Islam, and reckoned that in a few days it shall be totally routed.

The words وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا allude to the fact that they awaited the destruction of Islam and the Muslims. However, God, much to their chagrin, blessed Muslims with “a clear victory”. In fact, they, who were very proud that by not supporting the Prophet (sws) they had taken a wise political step, have doomed themselves.

The word بُورٌ is the plural of بَائِرٌ. It means “the destroyed ones”.

وَمَنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَعِيرًا (١٣)

In this verse, the Almighty has delivered His verdict about the Hypocrites who in spite of laying claim to faith are such cowards in fulfilling the rights of God and His Prophet (sws), and instead of desiring

14. In fact you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people and this notion took roots in your hearts. And you harboured evil thoughts and at last ended up doomed.

15. And those who did not profess faith in God and His Messenger, We have prepared Hell for these disbelievers.



the dominance of Islam are so desirous of its destruction that they cannot be regarded as ones who have professed faith in God and His Prophet (sws); they are disbelievers and these disbelievers should remember that God has prepared Hell for them.

وَاللَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (١٤)<sup>16</sup>

They should also remember that no one will be able to save them from God's grasp. To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; no one else shares this kingdom with Him. He will forgive those He wants to and punish those He wants to.

The words *وَاللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا* say that everyone should rest assured that God is forgiving and merciful. He does not want to catch people and punish them; He wants to show mercy to them. For this reason, people instead of trying to find false supports should find the way to earn His pleasure which He has opened for people through His Prophet (sws).

سَيَقُولُ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ إِذَا انْطَلَقْتُمْ إِلَى مَغَانِمَ لِتَأْخُذُوهَا ذَرُونَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُبَدِّلُوا كَلَامَ اللَّهِ قُل لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُونَا كَذَلِكُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَسَيَقُولُونَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُونَنَا بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٥)<sup>17</sup>

The verse implies that though at this instance these people stayed behind by presenting an excuse, yet when in future there would arise instances when immense war booty might come the way of Muslims without even waging war, they will come to the Prophet (sws) feigning bravery and asking permission to take them along. In this manner, they would want to change the decision God has made about them and also receive the war booty without endangering themselves. The Prophet (sws) is told that when such an instance arises, he should tell them that they cannot go along with the Muslims: God had given a similar directive to them earlier; but at that time they sat in their homes; so why are they so anxious now in coming along with them.

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16. And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He will pardon whom He wishes and punishes whom He pleases and God is Forgiving and Merciful.

17. When you set out to acquire the spoils, those who stayed behind will say: "Permission be granted to us also that we may come with you." They seek to change the Word of God. Tell them: "You shall certainly not come with us." So had God said to you earlier as well. Then they will reply: "In fact, you are jealous of us." In fact, it is these people who understand very little!

The words *إِلَى مَغَانِمَ لِنَاخُذُوهَا* refer to the bounties of Khaybar etc which became available to the Muslims after the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah. Muslims did not have to wage any war to acquire these war booties. In fact, the enemy being over-awed by them left the field to them. The Jews of Khaybar were very affluent. As a result, the Muslims were able to lay hands on a lot of war booty. It is evident from the word *لِنَاخُذُوهَا* that it is as if Muslims actually came out of their houses to take the war booty without waging any war.

The words *يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُبَدِّلُوا كَلَامَ اللَّهِ* refer to the fact that these Hypocrites by making this offer at this instance would want that the word of God be changed which He had said about them. This refers to what God has said about them in verse six earlier: *وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءَ عَلَيْهِمْ ذَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ* (and that He may punish the Hypocrites and the Idolaters, men and women, who would make evil estimations about God; a turn of evil shall befall them and God is angry with them and he has cursed them and has prepared for them Hell and it is an evil abode.) In other words, these people wanted that they do nothing for the cause of religion yet still reap the benefits of both the Herein and the Hereafter; however, this desire of theirs shall not be fulfilled; they cannot change the word of God in this matter unless they adapt and change themselves in accordance with the true requirements of religion.

The words *فَلِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَا كَذَلِكُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ* imply that if they seek permission from the Prophet (sws) to go out with him, they should not be given this permission; he should explicitly refuse this permission. God had given them a similar directive earlier but they did not obey it and cowardly stuck to their homes. In my opinion, this refers to the general call given by the Prophet (sws) to offer 'umrah; however, these Hypocrites, as is evident from the afore-mentioned details, evaded this call. The implied meaning is that before this they have desisted to go out with the Prophet (sws) of God; so why are they so anxious now to go out now? Is it because they think that this time they will easily rout the enemy without any danger?

Some people are of the opinion that the statement of the Hypocrites referred to in *كَذَلِكُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ* is the one which is mentioned in verse eighty two of Sūrah Tawbah. However, this view is not tenable. Sūrah Tawbah mentions those Hypocrites who had shown cowardliness at the time of the battle of Tabūk. This battle took place a few years after the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah, and here the reference is to an incident which

took place before the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah. The words *مِنْ قَبْلُ* (before that) clearly point to this.

*فَسَيَقُولُونَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُونَنَا بَلْ كَاثِرُونَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا*: Though these Hypocrites will disgruntle a lot at not being given permission, and will throw the blame on Muslims of being jealous of them; however, this blame should be ignored because these people are very foolish. Because of their foolishness, they want to reap all the benefits in the name of religion both in this world and in that to come without making any sacrifice. It should now remain clear to them that their childish desires will never be fulfilled.

*قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعُونَ إِلَى قَوْمٍ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ تُقَاتِلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسْلِمُونَ فَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا* (١٦)<sup>18</sup>

These verses present before the Hypocrites a criterion to try them: if they are really sincere to God and His Prophet (sws), then they cannot prove this sincerity by expecting to acquire the war booty without endangering themselves; the time is about to come when they will be called upon to fight a powerful enemy; they will have to fight it with the resolve that the enemy either accept Islam or the sword. If they accept this call and go out to face the enemy, then God will richly reward them; however, if they show cowardliness even at that time as they did before, then they should remember that God will give them a grievous punishment.

The words *قَوْمٍ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ* refer to the Quraysh. In Arabia, it was only they who had such power and might so that they could be referred to in such words. Though an agreement of ceasefire had been made with them, a decisive war was essential to dislodge them as the custodians of the House of God. The objective of the Prophetic mission could not have been achieved without this.

*تُقَاتِلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسْلِمُونَ*: Since the Prophet (sws) was directly sent to the Quraysh, the Almighty raised him from among them so that in their own

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18. Tell those who were left behind from among the Bedouins: “Soon you shall be called upon to fight a mighty enemy. You will have to continue fighting unless they embrace Islam. So if you followed this directive, God will reward you well; and if you turned away, as you turned away earlier, He will inflict on you a grievous punishment.”

tongue he could conclusively communicate the truth to them. Hence they were only faced with two options: to either accept Islam or face the sword. People of other religions could be made *dhimmīs* or *mu'āhids* but for the Ishmaelites, no such option existed. They could not even be made slaves. I have already written in detail on this specific case of the Ishmaelites in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Tawbah.

The words *وَأِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ* say that if at this instance also they show cowardice the way they had done so at the time of offering the 'umrah, then they should remember that they shall face the same grievous penalty as the one the Almighty has ordained for open enemies of Islam.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرْجٌ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ  
وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ يَْعَذَّبْهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٧)<sup>19</sup>

This is a mention of the handicapped whose non-participation in *jihād* would not be regarded as hypocrisy. The verse says that the blind, the lame and the sick will not be blamed for this on the condition that they obey God and His Prophet (sws) with full sincerity. If they continue to do so, then their compelling circumstances which could not allow them to serve religion will not deprive them of Paradise; In fact, God will admit them into Paradise, and if they desist from God and His Prophet (sws), then they too will face the grievous punishment which is destined for other disbelievers and enemies of Islam.

These handicapped people are also mentioned in verses 91-93 of Sūrah Tawbah. Readers may look up these verses; there certain aspects have been explained which have not been explained here.

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ  
السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا (١٨) وَمَعَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً يَأْخُذُونَهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا  
حَكِيمًا (١٩)<sup>20</sup>

After mentioning the people who shirked their responsibilities viz. a

19. It shall be no offence for the blind, the lame, and the sick, and he who obeys God and His Messenger, God will admit him into gardens watered by running streams, and he who turns away, God shall sternly punish him.

20. God was pleased with the faithful when they were pledging a covenant with you under the tree. So God knew what was in their hearts. Therefore He sent down tranquillity upon them, and blessed them with an imminent victory and also with many spoils which they will acquire and God is Mighty and Wise.

viz. the covenant they had pledged at the hands of the Prophet (sws), those people are mentioned who in very dangerous circumstances not only made a pledge of *jihād* at the hands of the Prophet (sws) at Ḥudaybiyyah but also duly fulfilled their responsibilities towards it. Their mention begins by the words لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ which show that the mere act of pledging a covenant at the hands of the Prophet (sws) had made the Almighty so happy about these valiant people that He declared His eternal pleasure for them. Thus this pledge is known as the Pledge of Ridwān in Islamic history. I have referred in the introduction to this *sūrah* to the circumstances in which the Prophet (sws) took this pledge and the great enthusiasm in which Muslims gave this pledge right in the heart of enemy territory. Readers may look it up.

إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ: it is evident that this pledge took place below an acacia tree. The word الشَّجَرَةِ refers to that very tree. This reference is meant to bring to light the circumstances of deprivation and frailty in which this great event of Islamic history took place.

فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ: the number of Muslims who made this pledge were not more than fourteen to fifteen hundred. Because of the restrictions of the *‘umrah*, they were unarmed as well. Only to defend the honour of their religion and relying on the immense help of God they had gotten ready to challenge the might of the Quraysh. Who else but God, in these circumstances, would have known their inner state of attention to God and seeking forgiveness from Him? While referring to this, it is said that God was aware of their situation, and in order to pamper and comfort them blessed them with assurance and mental peace. This is in accordance with the practice of God which I have been mentioning at various places of this *tafsīr*: when the servants of God get ready to wage *jihād* for His cause, then however much adverse the circumstances may be, the Almighty instills courage in them and it is this encouragement which is the real power that the most powerful of enemies cannot defeat.

The words وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا وَمَغَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً يَأْخُذُونَهَا refer to the victory of Khaybar and to that war booty which was acquired by the Muslims right after returning from Ḥudaybiyyah, and which deeply assured the Muslims that the promises of help made by God would be fulfilled and that the agreement of Ḥudaybiyyah was not their defeat but their clear victory and that this clear victory will *inshā‘allāh* prove to be the prelude to the conquest of Makkah.

In the verse وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا, the Almighty has referred to His

attributes which is a guarantee of the fact that all His promises shall necessarily be fulfilled. Even if the apparent circumstances may appear very unfavorable, yet God's power and wisdom dominates everything.

وَعَدَكُمُ اللَّهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً تَأْخُذُونَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هَذِهِ وَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ وَلِتَكُونَ آيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا (٢٠)<sup>21</sup>

The above verse was addressed to the Prophet (sws). This verse addresses the Muslims: God has promised them with a lot of war booty which they will acquire in the near future; to substantiate the fulfillment of this promise, He gave them this immediate war booty so that it may be a means of their assurance and a sign of the dominance of Islam.

Our exegetes have interpreted the words *وَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هَذِهِ* to refer to the conquest of Khaybar, and this inference seems correct to me because the conquest of Khaybar took place immediately after the incident of Ḥudaybiyyah.

The word *النَّاسِ* in *وَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هَذِهِ* refers to the Quraysh. In the agreement of Ḥudaybiyyah both Muslims and the Quraysh had consented to the restriction that they will not wage war against one another for ten years. The benefit which the Muslims received as a result was that it secured a good chance for themselves to wage war against the Jews of Khaybar, and these Jews because they knew that they would not be able to get the support of the Quraysh gave up very early. In a similar manner, the agreement of Ḥudaybiyyah opened up the way to another imminent victory, and it thus was proven that this agreement was not a defeat for the Muslims but the prelude to a great conquest as well as to other great victories in the future.

The conjugate clause of *وَلِتَكُونَ آيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ* is suppressed as per the customary principles of Arabic language: The Almighty blessed the Muslims with the immediate war booty of Khaybar so that it becomes evident to them that the agreement of Ḥudaybiyyah was a clear victory (*fath mubīn*) for them and also be a sign for the Muslims of the dominance and sovereignty of Islam in the future.

The words *وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا* are also appended in verse two of this *sūrah* and there I have explained that they refer to the fact that time is

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21. God has promised you with many spoils which you will acquire. Thus He gave this to you with all promptness and withheld the hands of people from you so that this can become a source of tranquillity and a sign for the Muslims and guide you to the straight path.

near when the Almighty will bless them with the favour of completion of religion, and will open for His servants that straight path of guidance which had been closed by the enemies of the truth. Since the House of God was the real landmark of this straight path, the glad tiding of its liberation from the possession of disbelievers are also concealed in these words.

وَأُخْرَى لَمْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ أَحَاطَ اللَّهُ بِهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا (٢١)<sup>22</sup>

This refers to the conquest of Makkah. The verse say that there is another success which the Almighty has promised them; though Muslims have yet to achieve it; however, it is not far off. God has it in His control and when this is so, then nothing can evade His grasp. God has power over everything. He will soon bring about this victory through His support.

### Section III: Verses (22-26)

In the succeeding verses, Muslims are assured that if the Quraysh had waged war at this instance, they would have been routed; however, it was the wisdom of God that did not allow war to ensue so that no harm should come to Muslims who were trapped in Makkah. In this regard, the moral superiority of the Muslims is highlighted which they won against the disbelievers at this time. It became evident from this that the affiliation the Quraysh had shown to emotional frenzy had little time to live on.

Readers may now recite the succeeding verses.

#### Text and Translation

وَلَوْ قَاتَلَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوَلَّوْا الْأَذْوَارُ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (٢٢) سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا (٢٣) وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا (٢٤) هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيِ مَعْكُوفًا أَنْ يَنْبَلِّغَ حِلَّهُ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُؤْمِنُونَ وَنِسَاءٌ مُؤْمِنَاتٌ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوهُمْ أَنْ تَطَّوُّوهُمْ فَتُصِيبَكُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَعَرَّةٌ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ لِيُدْخِلَ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٢٥) إِذْ

22. And another victory also on which you do not have power as yet. However, God has it in His grasp and God has power over all things.

جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٢٦)

And if these people who have disbelieved had waged war against you, they would have shown their backs. Then they would not have found any one to protect or help them. This is an established practice of God which is continuing from before and you shall find no change in the practice of God. (22-23)

And it was He who withheld their hands from you and yours from them in the valley of Makkah after He had given you dominance over them and God was watching whatever you were doing. (24)

And it is they who disbelieved and stopped you from the Sacred Mosque and also prevented the sacrificial animals from reaching their destination. But for the fear that you might have trampled underfoot believing men and women unknowingly and thus because of them incurred blame without knowing, [We would have permitted you to fight them; however God did not permit this so that] He may admit to His mercy whom He wants to. And had those people been separated from them, We would have punished these people more grievously than the disbelievers. (25)

And remember the time when the disbelievers engendered bigotry in themselves– the bigotry to emotional frenzy. So God sent down His tranquility on His Messenger and on the faithful and bound them of the word of piety and they were worthy and deserving of it. And God has knowledge of all things. (26)

### Explanation

وَلَوْ قَاتَلَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوَلَّوْا الْأَذْوَارُ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (٢٢)<sup>23</sup>

This is an assurance to the Muslims and a warning to the Quraysh: if God did not permit the Muslims to wage war at Ḥudaybiyyah, then this was not because there was any fear of their defeat; had war ensued, their enemies would have shown their backs and not the Muslims and would have run away from the battlefield in a manner that they would have found no one to give refuge to them. So there is no room for the Quraysh to become conceited as a result of this agreement and to regard it to be a sign of weakness of the Muslims. The Quraysh, on the contrary, should

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23. And if these people who have disbelieved had waged war against you, they would have shown their backs. Then they would not have found any one to protect or help them.



be grateful to God that they have been granted an opportunity by God to reflect on the circumstances.

سُتَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُتَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا (٢٣)<sup>24</sup>

This is a reference to the divine practice which the Almighty has prescribed for those who deny the Messengers of God: when the truth is conclusively communicated to them, they are totally routed and are not able to find any refuge anywhere. So relentless and unassailable is this practice of God that never does any change occur in it. The history of all the messengers of God bears witness to it.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا (٢٤)<sup>25</sup>

The expression بَطْنِ مَكَّةَ refers to Hudaibiyyah. It is situation right in the valley of Makkah and thus has been referred to in these words.

The verse says that if at this instance a battle did not take place, then this was the result of God's planning. Though the Almighty had granted Muslims dominance over them and if a battle had taken place they would surely have been routed; however, God's wisdom did not allow this battle to take place and hence He made the Muslims withhold their hands from the Quraysh and vice versa.

The words وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا imply that the Almighty was assessing the situation; hence whatever happened, happened as per God's wisdom and in it lies the betterment of the Muslims.

The words مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ express the fact that Muslims were morally superior to their opponents as well as the fact that they had stronger determination and resolve than them. It should be kept in mind that when the Quraysh were informed of the zeal and enthusiasm of the Muslims which they had shown while making the pledge at the hands of the Prophet (sww), they were quite dismayed. They thus immediately sent a delegation to strike an accord of peace. This delegation did try to show that they were not perturbed at the Muslim sentiments but it was plainly evident that they did not have the guts and courage to fight the Muslims.

24. This is an established practice of God which is continuing from before and you shall find no change in the practice of God.

25. And it was He who withheld their hands from you and yours from them in the valley of Makkah after He had given you dominance over them and God was watching whatever you were doing.

Hence, of their own accord, they acceded to this statute in the agreement that when the Muslims will come over the next year to offer 'umrah, they will vacate Makkah for three days to avoid any clash with them.

هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيِ مَعْكُوفًا أَنْ يَبْلُغَ مَحَلَّهُ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالُ مُؤْمِنُونَ وَنِسَاءُ مُؤْمِنَاتٌ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوهُمْ أَنْ تَطَّوُّوهُمْ فَتُصِيبَكُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَعَرَّةٌ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ لِيُدْخِلَ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٢٥)<sup>26</sup>

This verse states the divine wisdom for not letting a war to ensue at that instance: though the excesses committed by the Quraysh were quite blatant as they rejected the call of the true faith and stopped the believers from entering the House of God and did not allow the sacrificial animals to reach their destination. However, in spite of all this misconduct, it was God's wisdom which did not allow Muslims to lift arms against them.

The greatest reason for this was that there were many believing men and women in Makkah about which Muslims were not aware of. There was a chance that had the Muslims launched an offensive, these innocent Muslims too would have been put to the sword together with the Quraysh and as a result they would become guilty of killing their own brethren.

The second reason for this was that there were many Makkans who though had not embraced faith but were quite close to doing so. The Almighty willed to envelop them in His mercy.

The words *لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا* say that had the believers separated themselves from the disbelievers, the Almighty would have inflicted a grievous penalty on the disbelievers.

This grievous penalty can refer to the onslaught of the Muslims as well as to something similar to the punishment which visited the previous nations. It has been shown in this *tafsīr* that when they rejected their respective messengers, the Almighty separated the believers from them and destroyed the rest of the nation.

It is very evident from this verse that if Muslims have to wage war

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26. And it is they who disbelieved and stopped you from the Sacred Mosque and also prevented the sacrificial animals from reaching their destination. But for the fear that you might have trampled underfoot believing men and women unknowingly and thus because of them incurred blame without knowing, [We would have permitted you to fight them; however God did not permit this so that] He may admit to His mercy whom He wants to. And had those people been separated from them, We would have punished these people more grievously than the disbelievers.

against a nation in which there are some Muslims, then they should try their best that no harm comes to them. However, if the enemy tries to take advantage of this situation by for example bringing forth its Muslim combatants to fight against the warring Muslims or using them as a human shield to protect themselves or if these Muslims among the enemy because of their national affiliation or some worldly interest come out to fight the attacking Muslims, then in these circumstances the collective interest of the Muslims will have to be kept in consideration even though this may cause harm to some faction of the Muslims.

The word هَذِي here is qualified by the word مَعْكُوفًا to show the delicate nature of the situation: in spite of the fact that the Quraysh put up a very insolent attitude by not letting the sacrificial gifts brought for the king of the world reach their destination and they could not end up at the place of sacrifice, the wisdom of the Almighty entailed that the Quraysh not be punished for this insolence so that the Muslims which are stranded among them are not harmed in any way.

The answer to the conditional particle لَوْ (if) in رَجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُونَ is suppressed and this suppression points to the intense anger of the speaker. I have been explaining this style at various places in this *tafsīr*.

The last part of the verse كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا has unfolded this suppression.

In the expression لَمْ تَعْلَمُوهُمْ أَنْ تَطَّوُّوهُمْ the words أَنْ تَطَّوُّوهُمْ are a *badal* (permutative) from the accusative pronoun هُمْ ie. “There was chance that you would rout them without knowing.” In this manner they would be responsible for spilling the blood of their own brethren.

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ الْحَمِيَّةَ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٢٦)<sup>27</sup>

This verse highlights the moral superiority of the Muslims: even though the Quraysh exhibited their inclination to emotional frenzy at every step which could have incited the Muslims, yet the Almighty blessed His Prophet (sws) and the Muslims with the grace and urge to

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27. And remember the time when the disbelievers engendered bigotry in themselves– the bigotry to emotional frenzy. So God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the faithful and bound them of the word of piety and they were worthy and deserving of it. And God has knowledge of all things.

face these delicate circumstances with great patience and deep deliberation and to not being led by the indecent behavior of the enemy into taking any step that was against the will of God and the interest of religion.

The word سَكِينَت means patience, forbearance, wisdom and sobriety. In the collective affairs, there arise many occasions in which the forbearance and wisdom of a group is strongly tested. At such instances, if the group while being provoked by the attitude of the enemy takes a hasty step, then this causes irreparable damage to the real objective. It is purely because of God's grace that such trials are befittingly faced by a group and its leaders, and this urge to do so is only afforded to people who remain attached to their Lord in all circumstances.

The words حَمِيَّة الْجَاهِلِيَّة refer to the various steps taken by the Quraysh against the norms of truth and justice to merely satisfy their ego. They included:

- They were fully aware that the Prophet (sws) had only come to Makkah to offer 'umrah; the intention of any war was neither there nor were he and his companions armed for this purpose. In spite of this, they did not permit him to visit the House of God and offer animals for sacrifice brought for Him.

- They not only did not show any respect to the envoys which were sent by the Prophet (sws) to inform them of his arrival but also went after to kill one of them, and dealt with the other one in such a hesitant fashion that the rumor spread among the Muslims that they had also killed him.

- While negotiating the conditions of the truce of Hudaibiyyah, they created such complexities and insisted on such conditions which could not give them any political benefit; they only temporarily assured them that they had the upper hand.

The natural reaction of the Muslims on this attitude of the Quraysh would have been to retaliate strongly; however, the سَكِينَت revealed by God to them made them content and satisfied on the decision of God and His Prophet (sws).

The words وَالزَّمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى say that in spite of this inciting behaviour from the Quraysh, the Almighty made the Muslims follow the slogan of virtue (كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى). This refers to the acknowledgement of the devoted Companions of the Prophet (sws): ! (I am happy that God is the Lord, Muhammad the Messenger and Islam the religion.)<sup>28</sup> It is this slogan which has remained the shield of the sincere

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28. See, for example: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 290, (no. 386).

and truthful Muslims against the evil suggestions of Satan and his agents. Whenever circumstances arose in which Muslims thought that the decision of the Prophet (sws) was against their interest, they regarded it to be a latent suggestion of their souls and then got rid of it while confessing it to be a suggestion only. It is this great slogan which became the shield for the Muslims in these delicate circumstances and they remained happy with the decision of their Messenger even though their desires were different.

The implication of the words **وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا** is that persevering on this slogan is not something which can be attained by everyone who lays claim to it; only those are able to acquire this who deserve it and are worthy of it. Since the Companions of the Prophet (sws) deserved it and were worthy of it, the Almighty kept them resolute in delicate circumstances also. The Almighty does not allow the faith of people to go waste who duly value their faith, and try to remain steadfast on it in all circumstances.

The words **وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا** imply that God is not unaware of the circumstances of His people. He is aware of the trials they are put through and has knowledge of all the situations and sentiments they pass through. If people keep fulfilling their required obligations, the Almighty does not leave them alone; He helps and supports them at every step.

#### Section IV: Verses (27-29)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. It is first said that the dream seen by the Prophet (sws) was true. A delay in its materialization was based on God's wisdom. After that the predictions found in the Torah and the Gospel of the dominance of the Muslims are referred to so that not only Muslims receive assurance but also try to inculcate in themselves the qualities and traits which are mentioned about them in the previous scriptures.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to read the succeeding verses.

#### Text and Translation

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا بِالْحَقِّ لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِينَ  
مُحَلِّقِينَ رُؤُوسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِينَ لَا تَخَافُونَ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ فَتْحًا

قَرِيبًا (٢٧) هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (٢٨) مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيَّمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٢٩)

God showed His Messenger a true dream: Indeed, if God wills, you shall definitely enter the Sacred Mosque in peace with hair shaven or shortened; you will have no fear. He knew what you knew not; so before this He blessed you with an imminent victory. It is He Who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true Faith so that He may make it prevail over all religions and sufficient is God as a witness. (27-28)

Muhammad is God's Messenger and those who are with him are stern to the disbelievers but merciful to one another. You will find them ardently kneeling and prostrating to seek God's grace and pleasure. They can be distinguished by marks of prostration on their faces. Thus is their example in the Torah and in the Gospel their example is like a sown land which puts forth its shoot and supports it; then it became strong and firm upon its stalk, delighting the farmers so that it enrages the disbelievers through it. God has promised those from these people who embraced faith and did good deeds forgiveness and a rich reward. (29)

### Explanation

لَقَدْ صَدَّقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا بِالْحَقِّ لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمَنِينَ مُحَلِّقِينَ رُؤُوسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِينَ لَا تَخَافُونَ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا (٢٧)<sup>29</sup>

It has been indicated earlier that this 'umrah was undertaken by the Prophet (sws) on the basis of a dream shown to him and for this reason people were expecting that this journey of theirs would be fruitful; however, when the result came out to be contrary to these expectations, the question arose in the minds of many that when the dream a prophet

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29. God showed His Messenger a true dream: Indeed, if God wills, you shall definitely enter the Sacred Mosque in peace with hair shaven or shortened; you will have no fear. He knew what you knew not; so before this He blessed you with an imminent victory.

cannot be false, how come they had to return without achieving the objective. It was in response to this question that the various aspects of wisdom behind the truce of Arabia were delineated earlier. Here, at the end, this dream is specially referred to and asserted that this God-inspired dream is absolutely true and certain to materialize. No one should doubt its truth. God willing, Muslims will soon enter the Sacred Mosque with hairs of their heads shaven or shortened and they will never have fear of any hindrance from anyone. The implication is that as a result of this agreement, 'umrah has become possible for them; the only difference is that they will be blessed with this opportunity the following year and this delay is not against the dream shown because the dream never said that this 'umrah shall be necessarily offered this year. Thus, when once this very question was posed to the Prophet (sws), he replied in similar terms. In other words, what was promised in the dream was not negated; the ground was laid this year that it be offered the next without any danger. The word بِالْحَقِّ relates to the word الرُّؤْيَا (dream). In other words, the dream was not a baseless one: it was absolutely true.

Shaving the hair of the head or shortening it is among the etiquette of *hajj* and 'umrah. I have already explained its philosophy and underlying wisdom. Shaving the head earns more reward yet shortening it is permitted too keeping in view the circumstances. Thus both are mentioned. The implication is that this caravan would consist of pilgrims of both types who will, God willing, enter the Sacred Mosque with this symbol of humility and servility without any fear or danger.

The words فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا refer to the aspects of wisdom in the delay incurred in offering 'umrah, as referred to in verse twenty five. These expediencies were not in the knowledge of the people but were in the knowledge of God; thus He did not wish that Muslims offer the 'umrah this year by defeating the Prophet (sws); however, His wisdom entailed that they go out for 'umrah this year as well so that He bless them with an "imminent victory" (فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا) which will pave the way for further victories and also provide them with the opportunity of offering 'umrah in peace and security.

People have generally interpreted this imminent victory to refer to the conquest of Khaybar; however in my opinion it refers to the truce of Hudaibiyyah which in the beginning of this sūrah is called "a clear victory" (فَتْحٌ مُبِينٌ). Readers may look up the blessings of this clear victory I have explained earlier in the light of the Qur'ān. This imminent victory was actually a prelude to the conquest of Makkah and though the latter

was a bit far off, this victory paved its way. That is why it is called an imminent victory. In other words, after this imminent victory, the real victory is that of the conquest of Makkah which though has not yet materialized yet God has it in His grasp as referred to in verse twenty one earlier.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (٢٨)<sup>30</sup>

This verse has already passed with slight difference of words in Sūrah Tawbah, and is also a part of Sūrah Şaff ahead. I have explained its occasion and context and its meaning in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Tawbah. It, in other words, expresses glad tidings for the conquest of Makkah because on this conquest depended the dominance and supremacy of Islam in the whole of Arabia. Thus after this conquest, all religions which existed in Arabia, became subservient to Islam and soon the time came when the Prophet (sws) declared that two religions cannot exist together in Arabia. The verse says that the very God Who showed His majesties pointed to earlier has sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion in order to make it dominant over all religions. In other words, this is an irrevocable decision of fate: neither the Idolaters can change it nor the Jews or Christians. This decision of God shall be implemented even if they dislike it. In Sūrah Tawbah, this subject is discussed in the following words:

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ  
هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ  
(٩: ٣٢-٣٣)

These [Jews and Christians] want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths; but God has decided with certainty to perfect His light, even though these disbelievers abhor it. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true religion that He may make it prevail over above all religions, even though the Idolaters abhor it. (9:32-33)

If the context of the above verses is looked into, it will become plainly

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30. It is He Who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true Faith so that He may make it prevail over all religions and sufficient is God as a witness.



evident that the first of them challenges the People of the Book, and the second of them challenges the Idolaters of Arabia. It was these two religious denominations which Islam faced in the land of Arabia. Later on, the scope of this opposition widened; however, history bears evidence that as long as Muslims adhered to Islam, the Almighty made their religion dominant at every place.

The words وَكَفَى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيدًا imply that however much the opponents regard this glad tidings to be far-fetched, they are bound to materialize and God alone is sufficient to bear witness to this. Muslims are assured by these words: they should not be worried by the opposition of their opponents and the adversity of their circumstances. This promise of God will definitely be fulfilled. What is said by the words وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ and وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ in the above cited verse of Sūrah Tawbah is said here in different words.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ  
فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ  
وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ  
الزَّרَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا  
عَظِيمًا (٢٩)<sup>31</sup>

Here, at the end, there is a reference to the attributes of the Prophet (sws) and of His Companions (rta) as well as to the gradual dominance of Islam as mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel.

The purpose of citing this reference is to show to the Muslims how they are portrayed in the previous scriptures. In this manner, they would be conveyed glad tidings and also become aware about the qualities God wants to see in them and which are the ones which will introduce them among others.

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31. Muhammad is God's Messenger and those who are with him are stern to the disbelievers but merciful to one another. You will find them ardently kneeling and prostrating to seek God's grace and pleasure. They can be distinguished by marks of prostration on their faces. Thus is their example in the Torah and in the Gospel their example is like a sown land which puts forth its shoot and supports it; then it became strong and firm upon its stalk, delighting the farmers so that it enrages the disbelievers through it. God has promised those from these people who embraced faith and did good deeds forgiveness and a rich reward.

The second purpose for this citation is to warn the People of the Book that they must not deliberately sound as if they know nothing and also not intentionally conceal the truth. The Almighty had informed them earlier about these details so that when the time comes they will bear witness to them; however, it is their misfortune that instead of bearing witness to them, they showed animosity and opposition.

The third purpose of this citation is to make evident to the Muslims that the Almighty will grant them dominance in Arabia but this will take place gradually; neither should they become hasty nor lose hope. They should patiently and diligently nurture the seed they have sown. The time will come when the Almighty will make it into such a strong and expansive tree that a whole world will seek refuge in its shade.

The expression مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ has generally been translated such that مُحَمَّدٌ is regarded as the *mubtadā* (inchoative) and رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ as the *khabr* (enunciative); however, in my opinion, رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ is an attribute and *‘atf al-bayān*. The predicate is stated ahead as: أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ. This is an allusion to a parable mentioned in the Torah in which the whole community of the Muslims is portrayed such that Muḥammad (sws) is their chief and leader. If رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ is regarded to be the predicate thereby regarding مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ بَيْنَهُمْ as a complete sentence so that a new sentence begins with وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ, this eloquence of the discourse would be lost. The real majesty of this whole group will become evident only when Muḥammad is presented as its ultimate exemplar, as indeed he was.

The words وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ express a distinctive feature of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta): they are stern and rock-hard to the disbelievers but as soft as silk to one another. In other words, all their honour and support is faith-specific. If people who do not share their religion try to use them for their interest, they will not even be able to insert a finger between the edifice which constitutes the believers. On the other hand, they are very merciful and affectionate to the faithful. This subject is discussed in this very context in verse 54 of Sūrah Mā'idah thus: (وَالَّذِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَلاظَةُ أَعْيُنٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (5:54)). Since both discuss the same topic, I am reproducing below what I had written so that the real meaning of this part of the verse becomes evident in the light of the parallel verse:

The word أَذِلَّةٌ is the plural of ذَلِيلٌ. In Arabic, this word connotes both a positive and a negative meaning, as I have explained while writing the *tafsīr* of verse 123 of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān. When it connotes, its

positive meaning, as is the case here, it means soft-spoken, gentle, obedient, humble and docile. The word ذُلُول also occurs in this meaning. An obedient camel is called ناقة ذلول.

The word أَذِلَّةٌ is the plural of عَزِيزٌ. It is used in contrast with أَذِلَّةٌ. It means something hard, difficult, burdensome, difficult to surmount and non-docile. If it is said: هُوَ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيَّ it would mean: "that thing is very burdensome for me; to control it is very difficult for me."<sup>32</sup>

In this regard, I had explained the meaning of شَدِيدٌ عَلَيَّ in the following words:

Same is the meaning of شَدِيدٌ عَلَيَّ. A beautiful couplet of a Ḥamāsī poet reads:<sup>33</sup>

إذا المرء أعيته المروءة ناشئا  
فمطلبها كهلا عليه شديد

Idhā al-mar'u a'yathū al-marū'ah nāshi'an  
Fa maṭlabuhā kahlan 'alayhi shadīd

(If a person is unable to create resolve in himself in his blooming youthful age, then acquiring it in old age is very difficult.)

In other words, the believers are very gentle, soft, harmless, flexible and adjustable for the Muslims but they are rock hard for the disbelievers. If they try to use them for their interests, they would not be able to mould them in any way ... Jesus (sws) had directed his disciples to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (Matthew, 10:16), and in this verse too both these aspects are kept in consideration.<sup>34</sup>

It also needs to be kept in mind that this verse of Sūrah Mā'idah occurs in precisely the same context as the under discussion verse of Sūrah Fath. I have explained it there that the hypocrites are warned that their character is totally opposite to what an Islamic character should be. They should have been very submissive to the believers and very tough on the disbelievers; however, they have made themselves toys in the hands of

32. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 318.

33. Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān al-h@amāsah*, vol. 2, 18.

34. Ibid., vol. 2, 318-319.

the disbelievers but are very clever in deceiving the Muslims. In this *sūrah* too, it may be remembered, the character of the hypocrites has been mentioned in detail in verses 6-18. Here, at the end, this collective conduct of the Muslims is highlighted so that the hypocrites may see what their real character should be like and what they, on the contrary, are displaying: they want misfortunes to descend on the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) and keep going to the disbelievers to assure them that if these disbelievers fear any danger from the Muslims, they will always support them.

By not understanding the meaning of أَشِدَّاءَ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ, some people were led to wrongly believe that Islam wants Muslims to be harsh and disgusting with non-Muslims in every day life; however, neither can this attitude be derived from the Qur'ān nor can one find corroboration for it from the practice of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta). I hope that my explanation of the verse in the light of parallels would suffice to dispel this misconception.

The words تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا portray their attachment with God and their fondness for waking up at night and praying to him at the time of *tahajjud*. In other words, whoever will see them will gather on first sight that these people are totally different from the common people they come across in this world. They are a group of noble and pure souls whose real objective in life is to please God. Thus they will either be seen kneeling or prostrating. In the previous part of the verse, that aspect of their character was highlighted which related to their fellow brethren; in this part of the verse, the aspect of their character highlighted is the one which relates to their Creator. In other words, their relationship with their fellow human beings exists on the right footings for they are very gentle with the righteous and very non-compromising for the wrongdoers, and their relationship with their Creator is also very strong and set on the right footings for they are never unaware of Him. And in the sight of God, the most likeable life is the one which relates to both God and His creation on the right bases; if there is any flaw in this regard, then the whole life of a person turns haywire.

The words سَيِّمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ point to their special distinctive feature: evident on their faces are the marks of prostration. It is apparent from these words that the marks referred to here are the ones which appear on the forehead because of profuse prostrations. It is also very evident from these words that these marks are very dear to God – so much so that He wants that in this world this *ummah* be recognized from others by these

marks. All these deductions are evident from the words of the Qur'ān; therefore, I do not regard the view of those people to be correct who have tried to metaphorically interpret the word of this part. I do not deny the fact that some people try to create these marks on their foreheads to show off; however, just because there are some people who are show offs, one cannot belittle the status of this great distinctive feature of the believers. Just as there is a possibility to be ostentatious in this regard, this possibility exists in every big and small practice of religion.

It is evident from some narratives that 'Umar (rta) cautioned some people because they had tried to make these marks apparent on their foreheads. He was a person who was well aware of the circumstances of people. If he warned or rebuked someone on this, then this was his right as a teacher and a mentor of people and this has a specific context. This does not belittle the mark of distinction of this *ummah* mentioned in this verse.

The words *ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ* say that this parable of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) has been mentioned in the Torah. This is a reference to the predictions about the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) found in Torah, the Psalms and in the scriptures of the Prophet Isaiah (sws) even though the Jews by altering them had completely distorted them, and the process of this distortion is still continuing. They try to interpolate all places of their scriptures which they think can be used by the Muslims in their favour. However, even today, there are passages found in the Torah and the Gospel which can only refer to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). For example:

The LORD came from Mount Sinai and dawned upon them from Mount Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran and came with ten thousand holy ones and there was a fiery *sharī'ah* for them in his right hand. (Deuteronomy, 33:2)

Obviously, no one else except Muḥammad (sws) can be alluded to by this prediction. It mentions the mount Paran and also ten thousand holy ones in explicit words. Here it should be kept in consideration that this prediction cited by the Qur'ān is with reference to the dominance of the Muslims, and this is an established fact that at the time of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (sws) had ten thousand Companions (rta) by his side.

It is only in the knowledge of God, the knower of the unknown, how many distortions have taken place in this prediction; however, a recent example of this distortion is that in some versions the words ten thousand

have been replaced by ten lacs. The only objective of this being that Muslims may not be able to apply it to the conquest of Makkah. However, if this prediction is deeply deliberated upon, one will find in it a reference of all those things which the Qur'ān has alluded to.

The holy ones mentioned can only refer to people who are of noble character, pious, compassionate and diligent in worship. For this, the words used in the Qur'ān are: *تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ*. Now, two things can be possibly construed by mentioning the holy ones of the Torah by their traits. The first possibility is that the Qur'ān has made them fully distinct so that the People of the Book may recognize that the holy ones mentioned in their scriptures are the Companions of the Prophet (sws) and who by soon appearing in ten thousand number will prove correct this prediction. The second possibility is that all these traits were also mentioned in the Torah but just as the Jews tried to conceal other predictions made in favour of the Prophet (sws), here too they obliterated the traits and left the words “holy ones” so that they are able to interpret it as per their own wishes. Both these possibilities exist; however, no judge can deny the fact that if to anyone this prediction of the Torah refers to, it can only be Muḥammad (sws).

The second thing mentioned in this prediction of the Torah is “his right hand will have a fiery *sharī'ah* for them.” In my opinion, this is actually a mention of what the Qur'ānic words say: *أَشِدَّاءٌ عَلَى %*. This has been explained in the following words by Jesus (sws): “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew, 3:12).

At another place, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said:

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone ... Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. (Matthew, 21:42-44)

In the prediction of the Torah cited earlier from Deuteronomy, these words also occur:

Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your

hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction. (Deuteronomy, 33:3)

If the underlined words are reflected upon, one can see that the translation has rendered them ambiguous; however, what is said is no different than what is mentioned by the Qur'ān by the words: تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا.

After the parable of the Torah, the words: وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ تَرْبُوهُ فَأَنزَلَهُ فَاسْتَغَلَّظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سَوْتِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ refer to the parable mentioned in the Gospel. In the parable of the Torah, the devoutness in worship of the believers, their supremacy and their compassion and justice with other nations are portrayed. In the parable of Gospel, their gradual rise is depicted: though they will have a very frail beginning, yet one day it will become such a strong and expansive tree that many great nations will seek refuge in its shade.

In the Gospel of Matthew, this parable is mentioned thus:

He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches. (Matthew, 13:31-32)

With slight variation, this parable also occurs in chapter 4 of the Gospel of Mark and chapter 8 of the Gospel of Luke. The Qur'ān has explained this parable by saying that the stages a sown crop passes through, the same process will pass over Islam regarding its gradual rise to dominance. The seeds which are cultivated in a land initially put forth thin shoots; then these shoots receive support as a result of which these shoots become strong and sturdy and the plant stands on its stem. Similarly, a day will come when the seed of the truth sown in Arabia will bear fruit and reach full bloom. The sower of this seed will be overjoyed to see it; however, this will cause heartburn and anger in those who tried to stop its development.

The particle لِي in لِيُغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ is to express the consequence and the word الْكُفَّارَ is highlighting the real meaning of the parable. Since believers are implied in the parable, here at the end by saying that their rise and ascent will be a cause of yearning and envy for the disbelievers, it is as if the entity for which the parable was stated has been referred to. It is very common in the Arabic language that at the end of a parable or a

metaphor a word is used which points to the entity for which a parable or a metaphor is mentioned so that the real purport becomes evident. In the parable of the light mentioned in Sūrah Nūr, a clear example of this is present.

The words وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا at the end bring glad tidings of the promise of divine help and support for whose substantiation the predictions of the Torah and the Gospel were mentioned: people who would become exponents of the qualities stated and also remain firm in faith and deeds would be granted forgiveness and great reward by the Almighty. As far as those people are concerned, who lay claim to faith but their sympathies are more with the enemies of Islam than God and His Prophet (sws) and who, at Ḥudaybiyyah, showed the weakness mentioned earlier in the *sūrah*, if they do not mend their ways they will meet the fate destined for the opponents of Islam.

With the help of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr* (gratitude be to God for His favour).

Raḥmānābād

1<sup>st</sup> November 1976 AD

8<sup>th</sup> Dhū al-Qa‘dah 1396 AH

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